

# Fact Sheet: Healthy Smiles



## Introduction

Tooth decay is the most common preventable childhood disease. Even though a child's baby teeth will be replaced with permanent teeth, they should be

well cared for. Baby teeth allow children to chew properly, develop their speech, and maintain space for their permanent teeth. Healthy teeth give a child a healthy smile, and that smile can have an impact on how children feel about themselves and the way they look.

## Tips for Preventing Tooth Decay

- Brush and floss properly every day
- Limit soda and fruit drinks
- Do not allow a child to fall asleep with a bottle
- Limit the amount of time a child can have a bottle or cup when awake
- Limit snacks between meals
- Begin regular visits to the dentist by the child's first birthday

## Teeth Cleaning

Teeth cleaning can start as early as birth and should be a routine part of a child's day. Caregivers or parents should do the brushing until the child is about 6 years old or when that child can tie his or her shoes alone. Always monitor brushing to make sure it is done properly.

Infants with no teeth	Wipe gums using a clean cloth moistened with water at least once a day
Children with teeth under age 2	Use a soft, child-sized toothbrush with water and no toothpaste at least twice a day
Children over the age of 2	Use a soft, child-sized toothbrush with water and a pea-sized amount of toothpaste with fluoride at least twice a day

## Basic Brushing Skills

1. With young children it is often easier to brush the teeth when the child is lying down. Some possible positions are with the child on a changing table, making sure the child cannot fall, or on the floor with the child's head supported in an adult's lap.
2. Use a soft, polished-bristled, long-handled toothbrush.
3. For children over the age of 2, squeeze a pea-sized or smaller amount of toothpaste with fluoride on the toothbrush.
4. Brush the tongue, the top of each tooth and both sides of each tooth. Don't forget to brush where the tooth and gum meet.
5. Encourage the child to spit out the toothpaste.
6. Floss between teeth that are touching.

## Teething in Infants

Teething begins before the teeth actually appear. To ease the pain of teething try the following:

- Use a one piece teething ring or pacifier to suck on. This can be cold but should not be frozen.
- Have the infant suck on a cold wet washcloth.
- Use your clean finger to gently rub the infant's gums.

Teething should not cause a fever. If this does occur contact your child's doctor.

## Where To Find More Information:

National Maternal and Child Oral Health Resource Center Toolbox

[www.mchoralhealth.org/Toolbox/families.html](http://www.mchoralhealth.org/Toolbox/families.html)

Recursos Sobre Salud Dental (Spanish)

[www.cdc.gov/spanish/dental/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/spanish/dental/index.htm)

## Contact Information for Your Local Dentist:

Reference: British Columbia Dental Association. 2006. Tooth brushing tips for parents. Available at: [www.kidsmiles.ca/tipsheet.pdf](http://www.kidsmiles.ca/tipsheet.pdf) (Accessed 5/17/07).